



Zephaniah Wk. 11
Woe to the Oppressive City Pt 2
By Pastor Jody May 07/12/2026

[CALL TO HEAR]

Zephaniah 3:1-8 ESV

Judgment on Jerusalem and the Nations

3 Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled,
the oppressing city!

2 She listens to no voice;
she accepts no correction.
She does not trust in the LORD;
she does not draw near to her God.

3 Her officials within her
are roaring lions;
her judges are evening wolves
that leave nothing till the morning.

4 Her prophets are fickle, treacherous
men;
her priests profane what is holy;
they do violence to the law.

5 The LORD within her is righteous;
he does no injustice;
every morning he shows forth his
justice;
each dawn he does not fail;
but the unjust knows no shame.

6 "I have cut off nations;
their battlements are in ruins;

I have laid waste their streets
so that no one walks in them;
their cities have been made desolate,
without a man, without an
inhabitant.

7 I said, 'Surely you will fear me;
you will accept correction.
Then your dwelling would not be cut
off
according to all that I have
appointed against you.'
But all the more they were eager
to make all their deeds corrupt.

8 "Therefore wait for me," declares the
LORD,
"for the day when I rise up to seize
the prey.
For my decision is to gather nations,
to assemble kingdoms,
to pour out upon them my
indignation,
all my burning anger;
for in the fire of my jealousy
all the earth shall be consumed.

Pastor – "People of God, this is the Word of God."

People – "Thanks be to God."

Pray

Introduction

Last week the focus was on what Jerusalem had become: a rebellious, defiled, corrupt and oppressive group of individuals that were led by an even



Zephaniah Wk. 11
Woe to the Oppressive City Pt 2
By Pastor Jody May 07/12/2026

worse group of leaders. The accusation from God in the oracle states that these people, no longer accepted the voice of God, they could no longer draw near to God (1). Their defilement has run so deep, they have sought all the things that the other pagan nations had offered, this has given them a low view of God. We made the statement that was true then and is true now and is the warning from last week, **The more you grow distant from God the harder it is to hear Him, the harder it is to trust Him, and the harder it is to repent.**

Their leaders, suffering from the same disease of defilement, now no longer cared about the welfare of the people but saw them as a means to an end, a comfortable existence. The judges and rulers preyed on their own people, the prophets were fickle and gave tainted and untrue guidance, and the priests championed syncretism turning their once Holy religion, into something unrecognizable. God's people, those that were to image Him to the rest of the world, now had taken His name and had mixed His Honor with the same gods of the land that called for human prostitution, human slavery, and human sacrifice (3-4).

Fortunately for us, depravity never stops God, He will always remain faithful to Himself even when His people abandon Him. Since He is the epitome of justice and righteousness, He will not fail in preserving His name. (5). He preserves that value of His name, by regularly cleaning out those groupings of people that claim falsely they are God-fearers and He preserves a remnant for Himself through judgment. He did this in the days of Noah, He has done this in Zephaniah's day, He did this 2,000 years ago right after Christ's incarnation, and that work is now ongoing until He returns through the efforts of the HS.

Today we see the final verdict given in God's voice, it moves from the Zephaniah speaking a divine oracle to 1st person language, God uses Zephaniah to talk for Him. This is part 2 sermon of this most Oppressive City, the City of Jerusalem that was meant to be a light to all the world so that all may come to know the one true God. In the book of Zephaniah these 3 verses, 3:6-8, are the pinnacle of the judgement that God is about to pour out on Jerusalem on the Day of the Lord. You may even be thinking to yourself today, *I will be glad when we can stop talking about all this doom and gloom.*



Zephaniah Wk. 11
Woe to the Oppressive City Pt 2
By Pastor Jody May 07/12/2026

Well, you're in luck, for after this week the last part of this great book is the glorious future of those who kept the faith, those that repented, before the Day of the Lord. It is not only the promise that there will be a remnant but that there will be a Holy, Righteous, and Thriving people of God once again. What's more, it expands outside the borders now of Judah and goes into all the world. But we must keep this in mind, ***without the Glory of God's Judgment there is no Preservation of His people.***

Ezekiel 14:22-23 ESV

But behold, some survivors will be left in it, sons and daughters who will be brought out; behold, when they come out to you, and you see their ways and their deeds, you will be consoled for the disaster that I have brought upon Jerusalem, for all that I have brought upon it. ²³ They will [console](#) you, when you see their ways and their deeds, and **you shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it**, declares the Lord GOD."

God's judgment shows God's Righteousness and that all the actions He takes are good, for He IS the ultimate good. That viewing of God's divine judgement calls the remnant to put to turn from evil, turn from bad leadership and hope in Him.

We also get to witness today an important aspect of God's Grace when it comes to the world. It is the aspect of Grace that we call [Common Grace](#); the *undeserved favorable attitude of God toward all His creatures, not only toward the elect*. **There is a time though when the perfect patience of God runs out for those that are unrepentant.** He removes the protection that is offered through Common Grace to his people and the result is the guilty are punished. We are at that point in Jerusalem's history, and what we will see in the text today, they have had plenty of warning, and loads of patience poured out on them, so that when judgment comes there is no way one can believe that the judgment is not of fair measure.

MP

The Lord's patient endurance has an appointed end, therefore heed His correction, and walk by faith and wait on Him.



Zephaniah Wk. 11
Woe to the Oppressive City Pt 2
By Pastor Jody May 07/12/2026

[How to divvy this up]

1. The Lord has given visible warnings in history.

- ⁶ "I have cut off nations;
their battlements are in ruins;
I have laid waste their streets
so that no one walks in them;
their cities have been made desolate,
without a man, without an inhabitant.

As the Lord gives his final verdict, He wants to make it clear to those who have been living under His Grace why His patience has finally come to an end. By the way, there are *some people that believe perfect patience is a patience that never runs out*. In the [OT God's patience](#) is described as "long-suffering", and "slow to anger" but that doesn't mean that anger and final judgment never comes. Perfect patience is when patience has fulfilled its' use, it has preserved, to the point in time where God had already planned to bring judgment. Perfect patience is being slow to anger but it does not keep away a perfect ordained correction.

God starts off with past tense actions: ***I have cut off nations***; evidence their war towers (battlements) are torn down, they were conquered. ***I have laid waste their streets***; the ways of commerce and productivity have also stopped, no signs of life. ***Their cities have been made desolate***; what they once were, under whatever leadership, under whatever god, with whatever history was specific to them for identity purposes, is now gone! That grouping of people, that identity as a culture/nation/ethnicity is no more. That warning God gives to His people, in a time of perfect patience so that they would see His righteous judgement, His need to judge, and the future plans based on His judgment.

What did they see?

1st most recently they have watched **Assyria** (614 fall of Assur, 612 fall of Nineveh, 609 fall of Harran, 605 final defeat of the Assyrians in the battle of



Zephaniah Wk. 11
Woe to the Oppressive City Pt 2
By Pastor Jody May 07/12/2026

Carchemish) and the **Philistine** cities (604 Ashkelon and subsequently Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza). By the end of 597, many cities had been destroyed, from their military installations (*corner towers*) to their places of public life (*streets*), and Jerusalem had experienced the deportation of a significant part of its population.¹ The problem is, was Jerusalem viewing this “cutting off” as part of their favor? Were they viewing themselves as innocents? Was this merely retaliation for what these plaguing nations had done to them.

2nd they are also witnessing something that has transpired over centuries not just immediate history. They have seen and have even been involved with the destruction of **Canaanites**: Jericho – Joshua 6, Ai – Joshua 8, Makkedah – Joshua 10:28, Libnah – Joshua 10:29–30, Lachish – Joshua 10:31–32, Eglon – Joshua 10:34–35, Hebron – Joshua 10:36–37, Debir – Joshua 10:38–39, Hazor – Joshua 11:10–11, plus the broader southern and northern city summaries in Joshua 10:40 and 11:12.

This is where people have a hard time with the God of the Bible. All this conquering, warring, and a destruction of entire nations of which Israel has had a part in. To understand that you have to go back further to Genesis 9.

Genesis 9:22–27 ESV

²² And Ham, the **father of Canaan**, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. ²³ Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father’s nakedness. ²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, ²⁵ he said,

“Cursed be Canaan;

a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.”

²⁶ He also said,

“Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem;

and let Canaan be his servant.

²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth,

and let him dwell in the tents of Shem,

¹ Renz, Thomas, [The Books of Nahm, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah](#). The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. (Grand Rapids, MI: William E. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 597.



Zephaniah Wk. 11
Woe to the Oppressive City Pt 2
By Pastor Jody May 07/12/2026

and let Canaan be his servant.”

Destruction of Canaan was rooted in the wickedness of her people not in the prerogatives of God. God had saved Noah, the last righteous man on earth ([Gen 6:9](#)), his son Ham abused Noah, He is cursed for his wickedness. Instead of Canaan learning a lesson from the world's destruction decides to sire a most corrupt people. It had already been decreed Ham/Canaan therefore shall serve Shem, the line of Israel that leads to Abraham. It would happen the easy way or hard way that would be up to the people of the land.

Japheth's general boundaries

A broad biblical summary: - **North and northwest of the Near East - Asia Minor (Anatolia) - Aegean world / Greece - islands and coastlands** - areas stretching farther toward **Europe and the Black Sea** > **Genesis 10:5** — “From these the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations.”

Ham's general boundaries

Broadly: - Africa: Egypt, Cush, Put - Canaan / Levant - through Nimrod, some reach into Mesopotamia

Shem's general boundaries

Broadly: - Mesopotamia - Assyria - Elam / Persia region - Syria / Aram - Arabia

The line leading to Abraham

From Shem, the messianic and covenant line narrows:

- Shem - Arpachshad - Shelah - Eber - Peleg - Reu - Serug - Nahor - Terah - **Abram (Abraham)** This is mainly found in **Genesis 11:10-26**.

God in His own words connects what Zephaniah was describing in chapter 2, all the destruction of the nations surrounding Jerusalem. Now He reminds them of a few things.

1st their destruction was to tell you that wicked betrayal cannot be overlooked even though divine patience in the form of common grace is being given. Never mistake God's kindness or longsuffering for naivety or weakness that shall be one's doom.

2nd God had included a specific people, ISRAEL, from Shem's line to also be participants in the conquering of Canaan, so that they learn first-hand about God's holiness and righteousness, so they would not go the way of the world. God always gives the people He works with firsthand encounters with what happens to the rebellious, He constantly teaches His creation the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23).



Zephaniah Wk. 11
Woe to the Oppressive City Pt 2
By Pastor Jody May 07/12/2026

3rd even when you refuse to repent and listen, God will always keep His promises as we see Shem's other descendants Assyria to Babylon to Persia, conquer what Israel was told to do and put into subjection Egypt as well.

Application

God often warns before He strikes. - He teaches by Scripture, by providence, by the fall of others, by chastisements, and by history. - It is great folly to watch judgment fall elsewhere and still think, "It cannot happen to us."

Family how often have we done the same thing? How often we overlooked the truth, that the wages of sin is death? ([Rom 6:23](#)). How often have people in our lives, our nation's history, our family's history fall, and we ignore it and we turn not from the sin we do? God provides hard lessons from history to learn for the need of repentance and to understand that perfect patience has an end, and that God's perfect justice will eventually come.

2. The Lord's warnings were met with deeper corruption.

⁷I said, 'Surely you will fear me;
you will accept correction.
Then your **dwelling** would not be cut off
according to all that I have appointed against you.'
But all the more they were eager
to make all their deeds **corrupt**.

The first thing we want to take notice of **God's desire is that He truly wants for them to REPENT!** God has no wish to destroy His people, rather again the Lord's work in patience, the Lord's work though covenant promises, the Lord's work in history recording His judgments, is so that His people may turn.

"Surely you will fear me; you will accept correction." The good news is that it does work for some! There are some, the remnant who see, hear, and believe that we cannot just keep doing what we should NOT be doing. That is called the process of **Regeneration**, whereby through the HS the knowledge of a Holy God and that there is sin that separates us from Him. V. 7 is really the **beginning of the Gospel**; God has a desire to save His people!



Zephaniah Wk. 11
Woe to the Oppressive City Pt 2
By Pastor Jody May 07/12/2026

Why does He want this? ***"Then your dwelling would not be cut off according to all that I have appointed against you."*** Dwelling does not mean your house, in the Hebrew language it means your connection with God, it means the Lord as your shepherd, it is Temple language to mean where God dwells, it is the saving truth that wherever you are at, know that God is with you. The Lord's intention is to preserve us through His actions, so we like the nations are **not cut off!** (think of the descendants of Ham)

Then we see one of the most tragic lines in this Oracle perhaps the book:

"But all the more they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt." (7b)

The second thing we see here in v.7 is Jerusalem's choosing to harden their hearts. That's what makes this city so corrupt and so fallen. Don't we sometimes look back on their history and cry out in our minds, *"What's wrong with you!"* Why, because God is worth it, His love is too great, His patience is so Long suffering! My friends that is why faith is so important, and God's Grace is so precious, no one knows they need God that much until He opens their eyes. Don't turn a deaf ear to this message family today, it is God's patience with us today, for those that are far from Him, to take heed and see Him calling to you.

Application

I was reminded this week in study about the glorious truth of redemption for those that heed the call to repentance. When God saves, when He redeems, it is not just about being saved from sin and its' effects but is **being restored to God's presence**. It is being brought into the house of God, whereby you gain the presence of God once again in your life! It is the promise for all of God's people, that through God's efforts, you will be brought into a once and for all incorruptible city, as we are promised in Revelation 21. A city that needs not the sun nor moon to give light for the light of God shines from that place, this is a perfect dwelling place from which all the Glory of God shines, the wicked are never to know its' protection, and its' time will never end. God wants us all to have this eternal dwelling with Him, it is God's perfect patience delivering on the promise of God's eternal love.



Zephaniah Wk. 11
Woe to the Oppressive City Pt 2
By Pastor Jody May 07/12/2026

Don't neglect family the conviction in your hearts today. If there is something today that is drawing you away from God don't play the dangerous game of ignoring it, pretending it is not real. God desires you to know His saving presence today. Repent and turn home friend and you shall escape the wrath that is to come and you will receive His dwelling with you forever.

3. The Lord has appointed a final day of worldwide judgment.

⁸"Therefore wait for me," declares the LORD,
"for the day when I rise up to seize the prey.
For my decision is to gather nations,
to assemble kingdoms,
to pour out upon them my indignation,
all my burning anger;
for in the fire of my jealousy
all the earth shall be consumed.

Therefore, God moves, and he has already determined based on the ends of His patience how He will act. God declares **wait for me, for the day when I rise up to seize the prey**. That should make you think of the rulers from last week, the ones that were to do good for Jerusalem but instead, in the night fed off her people. This 'wait' is not a wait for hope for deliverance, this is a **"just you wait and see"** statement! God is not only going to judge Jerusalem but here again is that universal thread of all nations, which includes Jerusalem, for the purpose of judgment. In the fire of God's jealousy; His devotion to His cause, His Holiness, His justice, His righteousness, for His own name's sake the earth will be consumed in God's Zeal to finish this job!

We do need to ask this question though as it prepares us for the rest of the book. Who is He asking to wait? Who is it that He wants to display the grandeur of His justice for, who is it that he wants to deliver from these false leaders who prey on others, who is it that He wants to separate from those that have been spoiled by culture and wish not to turn?

We saw it in Ezekiel already this week, He tells **them** to wait you will see how I will judge. We saw it in Jeremiah when most the poor and lowly were left in Jerusalem after that final deportation. God is telling the **remnant**, those that



Zephaniah Wk. 11
Woe to the Oppressive City Pt 2
By Pastor Jody May 07/12/2026

hear Him, that fear Him rightly, that want Him, that look to the punished and are consoled, He says wait and see what I will do! Zephaniah here echoes the words of the prophet Isaiah that has gone before Him.

Isaiah 30:18 ESV

¹⁸ Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you,
and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.
For the LORD is a God of justice;
blessed are all those who wait for him.

Blessed are those family that wait on the Lord. We know now where this is headed. In Ezekiel's/Jeremiah's day it was the meek that inherited Jerusalem. In the Lord's Day at His coming, He told us it is the meek who will inherit the earth. Oh, people blessed are we the remnant who wait on the Lord, who seek to repent, who seek to leave this world behind, for we have seen the Lord of Glory Jesus, come and absorb our sins for us, and we were changed by witnessing God's wrath on Him. We have been given Mercy in His name. The **Active obedience of Christ** has given us righteousness in His name. His right as our true king is to impute to His people now the standing provided by His good works.

The Lord in Zephaniah's day told us to wait and He will be gracious to us. We waited and we did see Him, and yes, we witness to this world the LORD was indeed generous and gracious, and His patience has been so long suffering with His people. And now His patience still goes on, it is still allowing us a time to turn towards Him. Family I pray you have embraced His good judgment, I pray you see the need to put your faith in Christ, I implore you to receive His grace today before the time of His patience runs out.

MP

The Lord's patient endurance has an appointed end, therefore heed His correction, and walk by faith and wait on Him.

[CALL TO OBEY]

1. Learn from God's warnings before judgment falls.



Zephaniah Wk. 11
Woe to the Oppressive City Pt 2
By Pastor Jody May 07/12/2026

Do not watch the ruin of others and remain proud.

2. Receive correction quickly before your heart grows hard.

Repent early for delayed repentance is dangerous.

3. Take refuge in Christ before the Day of the Lord comes.

The judge of the universe has appointed a day of reckoning but has also provided redemption in a Savior. Wait and see means we took notice of Calvary and its' curse, and we receive by faith what it delivered to us, freedom from sin and eternal life secured by a risen Savior.

Charge

Church, Jerusalem's great sin was not ignorance but refusal. She had warnings, examples, prophets, covenant mercies, and still would not turn. Let us not repeat her rebellion. When God corrects, receive it. When God warns, fear Him. When God calls, draw near. And when the Day of the Lord is proclaimed, flee at once to Jesus Christ, the only righteous refuge from the wrath to come.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, You are righteous in all Your ways and holy in all Your works. We confess that too often we are slow to learn, slow to fear, and slow to repent. Forgive us for the ways we have heard Your warnings and yet remained stubborn. Keep us from the dreadful hardening that comes from resisting Your Word. Teach us by Your providence, how You are gracious through patience and righteous in all Your ways. Keep us from falling into temptation by ever increasing in our hearts an affection for your Son, the Christ, so we are preserved through a strong faith in Him. We thank You that where Jerusalem failed, Christ obeyed. Where we deserved indignation, He bore wrath for His people. Where our hearts were blind and stubborn, He has come as the righteous King, faithful Priest, and true Prophet to save.

As well Father we pray for those in our lives; our neighbors, friends, and family who right now are drawing towards the end of your divine patience. As



Zephaniah Wk. 11
Woe to the Oppressive City Pt 2
By Pastor Jody May 07/12/2026

Abraham asked for Lot please spare them, reveal to them how you are loving and yet Holy, please don't allow them to fall into an eternal hardening, but save them from the destruction to come. Give them a heart of flesh as well to live again. My friend, if this is you, call on the name of the Savior today and be saved from the just wrath to come. Confess your sins, recognize He must reign in your life, and put yourself in His care today.

We ask all these things in the perfect King Jesus' name, Amen.

Mark 14:22-25 ESV

Institution of the Lord's Supper

²² And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴ And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

When we partake of the bread of life we are celebrating and affirming the Active Obedience of Christ in place of the failed obedience on our part. We were already cut off at birth from dwelling with God, our sin separated us from the His good presence. But Jesus, obeying all that was required to bring us back into God's Grace, gives us His earned righteousness. All praise to Jesus who graciously has given us a permanent **dwelling** in God's Kingdom!

The juice we drink today is the symbol of His blood. Judgement is still needed for sin, a payment for rebellion and corruption must be offered. Jesus was that payment for us, by His blood the remnant has been made clean. And now as a changed people we wait eagerly for the final judgment, that we will be spared from, in the future to come. All praise to our perfect leader by whose sacrifice we are made clean!

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

* The Congregation will stand and recites:



Zephaniah Wk. 11
Woe to the Oppressive City Pt 2
By Pastor Jody May 07/12/2026

LBCF 1689 Chapter 32 Of the Last Judgment Paragraph 2. God Is Glorified by the Day of Judgment

“God’s purpose for appointing this day is to manifest the glory of His mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect, and of His justice in the eternal damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient.4...”

Romans 9:22-23

“What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— ”

4. Romans 9:22-23

[OFFERING+LAST SONG]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that has endured with us through an undeserved patience and love.

Go in the name of the Son, who delivers the Grace and Mercy required so that we never lose our dwelling place with Him.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that opens our eyes to the need for quick repentance, now go and share with the world, that God desires to save while there is still time.



Zephaniah Wk. 11
Woe to the Oppressive City Pt 2
By Pastor Jody May 07/12/2026

[FELLOWSHIP CONVERSATIONS]

1. verse 6 shows God warning Jerusalem through the destruction of other nations. What are some ways God still warns people today through providence and history?
2. Verse 7 says they were “eager” to make their deeds corrupt. What does that reveal about the hardening power of sin?
3. What makes delayed repentance so dangerous?
4. Verse 8 points to a coming day of judgment. How should the certainty of that day affect the way we live now?
5. How does Christ answer both the guilt exposed in this passage and the judgment it announces?



Zephaniah Wk. 11
Woe to the Oppressive City Pt 2
By Pastor Jody May 07/12/2026

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